



Department
for Education

Discounting and Early Entry Guidance

**For all state funded schools, independent
schools, FE colleges with 14 to 16
provision and local authorities**

October 2019

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Summary

Discounting ensures that, where a pupil has taken two or more qualifications with an overlap in curriculum, the performance tables only give credit once for teaching a single course of study. The early entry policy means credit is given to the first qualification taken where a pupil has more than one qualification in the same subject.

Discounting is an important part of the Department for Education's secondary school performance measures, defining when the performance points of a qualification are discounted against another so that only one qualification counts.

The discounting system affects the calculation of performance measures for a school in the performance tables and on the [Analyse School Performance](#) (ASP) data release. It does not alter the awards an individual pupil has achieved or limit the qualifications they can take.

Discounting may be required in a number of situations, for example:

- a pupil resits a qualification before the end of key stage 4, possibly with a different awarding organisation. Discounting then ensures that only one result is counted in the key stage 4 school performance tables calculations and measures
- the school provides a single course of study but then enters the pupil for two or more very similar qualifications. Discounting ensures that the achievement from this single set of teaching hours is counted only once

Discounting is governed by the allocation of discount codes to qualifications with similar curriculum content. Two qualifications will discount if they have the same discount code. Codes may be updated at any time during the year to improve the accuracy of discounting. This can affect the current cycle without prior notice.

Discounting is only applied to qualifications which count in the school and college performance tables in a given year. There is a restricted list of qualifications which count in key stage 4 school performance tables, and each qualification counts for no more than the equivalent of one GCSE.

The number of non-GCSEs that can count in the performance tables is restricted to three.

Expiry or review date

This advice will next be reviewed before September 2020.

Who is this advice for?

This guidance is for:

- local authorities

school leaders, school staff and governing bodies in all state funded schools, independent schools, FE colleges with 14 to 16 provision .

Principles of discounting

Once two or more qualifications are known to have the same discount code, the following principles are applied to determine which one is discounted:

- if a level 3 qualification is taken in the same subject with the same discount code as a level 1 or level 2 qualification, the lower level qualification is discounted. For example an AS discounts a GCSE¹
- where a pupil has more than one qualification in the same subject with the same discount code, only the one taken first counts (this also applies where the first qualification is level 1 and the second qualification is level 2)
- for qualifications which discount and are taken on the same day, the best result counts. However, schools should not vary the published starting time for an examination if there is a clash between papers of different awarding bodies or specifications in the same subject. For more information please see Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) instructions [here](#).
- where a pupil moves schools in year 9, 10 or 11 and has previously certificated a qualification whilst enrolled at another school, this grade is not counted in performance measures unless the school chooses not to re-enter the pupil. If the school re-enters the pupil, the grade from that attempt is counted, regardless of whether it is higher or lower than the previous attempt
- where a pupil has certificated a qualification more than three years before the end of key stage 4, the [first entry rule](#) does not apply. In most cases this will apply to pupils in years 8 and below. In these cases performance measures count the best grade achieved, either from before the three year cut-off point or the first entry after the cut-off point

Discount codes

A qualification is assigned a discount code on the basis of the subject area it covers. The purpose of a discount code is to group qualifications with similar content together allowing comparisons to be made between qualifications with the same discount code.

A list of qualifications that count in the 2019 key stage 4 school performance tables, together with their discount codes, can be found [here](#).

Using this, schools can see where two qualifications discount one another. The list provides descriptions of the discount codes and covers each year up until 2021².

¹ See section on AS level exception discounting for further information

² Codes may be updated at any time during the year to improve the accuracy of discounting. This can affect the current cycle without prior notice.

Can a pupil take multiple qualifications which discount?

Discounting only applies to the results of a school in the performance tables, not to the qualifications awarded to pupils. There are a number of educational reasons why a pupil might undertake qualifications which discount each other. A common one would be to recognise their progression through a course of study, for example, by taking a GCSE qualification before progressing to an AS level qualification.

In this scenario the AS level would discount the GCSE in the performance tables but the pupil would still get recognition for both.

How is the first entry date defined?

The date of the first (or only) examination for a qualification is taken as the entry date. These dates are used to decide which qualification counts as the first entry. Examination dates are available from the respective exam boards. In cases where exams in the same subject are scheduled for different days in the same series, only the qualification with the earlier exam counts in performance measures.

In cases where qualifications have no formal examination date, the certification date or coursework deadline date is used as the examination date. Further information on these dates can be obtained from the respective exam boards.

No unreformed GCSEs (A* to G), International GCSEs or level 1/level 2 certificates will count in performance tables once new GCSEs (9 to 1) in that subject are introduced. Following the introduction of new reformed GCSEs (9 to 1) entries into unreformed qualifications do not count in the performance tables. This includes early entries prior to 2017 in unreformed qualifications. Unreformed qualifications will continue to count until reformed GCSEs (9 to 1) are introduced. For further details, see Annex H of the Secondary Accountability measures guide [here](#).

Exception discounting for science qualifications

There are occasional situations where discount codes alone are not sufficient to achieve accurate discounting. In these circumstances rules about specific qualifications are applied.

Exception discounting applies only to science qualifications which count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Qualifications which count as science in performance measures are detailed on the EBacc list which is available [here](#). This includes details on the criteria for entering and achieving the science element of the EBacc.

The information below provides an overview of the exception discounting process. Examples have been provided to explain how exception discounting is applied. Timetabling of exams means some of these examples may not occur in practice, but are for illustrative purposes. Qualifications in bold in the tables are those which count in the school and college performance tables.

From 2018³, there are two science pathways (shown in further detail in Annex A):

- individual sciences (biology, chemistry, physics⁴)
- combined science

To meet the criteria for entry into the science element of the EBacc, a pupil must either take three individual sciences or combined science⁵.

The first qualification a pupil enters determines the pathway they are on, and subsequent entries to qualifications from a different pathway do not count in the school and college performance tables. For example, if a pupil takes biology, the only science qualifications that can count alongside in performance tables are physics, chemistry and computer science. Therefore if a pupil takes biology and then combined science subsequently, the combined science grade would not count in the performance tables.

A pupil takes the following:

17 May 2019	25 May 2019	June 2019
Biology (4)	Combined science (5-5)	Chemistry (4)

Table 1: Science example 1

Only the biology qualification taken in May and the chemistry qualification taken in June 2019 counts in the performance tables as the pupil is on the individual sciences pathway, and subsequent qualifications in the combined science pathway do not count. As this pupil has not taken another individual science, they do not meet the entry requirement to the science element of the EBacc so their science grades will not be used towards the EBacc APS measure. However the biology and chemistry grades may count towards Progress 8/Attainment 8.

³ Prior to 2018, there were three science pathways. The third science pathway included entries to core science, additional science and further additional science. From 2018, these qualifications no longer count in secondary school performance tables due to the introduction of reformed 9 to 1 GCSEs. For more information on GCSE reform, see the secondary accountability measures guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure>

⁴ Since 2014 computer science has counted as an individual science in the performance tables. However it can also count alongside combined science so it is not involved in science pathway discounting.

⁵ To achieve the EBacc threshold measure at grade 5 or above, pupils must achieve a) two grades at 5 or above if they have entered three single sciences or b) a grade 55 or above in combined science. Please note, the EBacc threshold measure is no longer a headline measure from 2018 in performance tables and is replaced with EBacc average point score, where a pupil's points in each EBacc element are accepted, regardless of whether they reach a certain threshold.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2017	May 2019	June 2019
Core science (A)	Combined science (6-6)	Physics (7)

Table 2: Science example 2

From 2018 onwards, the core science qualification taken in June 2017 no longer counts in school and college performance tables, following the introduction of reformed 9 to 1 GCSEs in science. Therefore, this early entry will not count for this pupil, despite the qualification counting in performance tables when they sat the exam. Therefore, the combined science entry taken in May 2019 determined that the pupil is on the combined science pathway. The later entry in physics in June 2019 does not count in performance tables as this pupil entered the combined science pathway first.

As this pupil has entered combined science, they count as entering the EBacc science subject area so their grade will count towards EBacc APS. This grade can also count towards Progress 8/Attainment 8.

Some science qualifications, such as computer science, are not included in the pathways. These are detailed in the last column in Annex A. This means that while they discount against other qualifications with the same discount code they still count in the performance tables, even if taken subsequently to other science qualifications in other pathways.

A pupil takes the following:

17 May 2019	25 May 2019	June 2019
Biology (6)	Chemistry (7)	Environmental science (A)

Table 3: Science example 3

The biology qualification taken on 17 May 2019 determines that the pupil is on the individual sciences pathway, therefore the chemistry entry also counts. As environmental science is not in a science pathway, it counts alongside the individual sciences as an extra qualification. However, environmental science is not counted as one of the four individual sciences that count towards the EBacc science pillar⁶, therefore this pupil does not count as having entered the science element of the EBacc as three individual sciences have not been taken.

Computer science does count as an individual science in the EBacc. However, computer science can also sit alongside the combined science pathway. Therefore if computer science is a pupil's first science qualification it does not determine a pathway, and the two science pathways are still open.

⁶ Individual sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, and combined science) Since 2014 computer science has counted as an individual science in the performance tables. However it can also count alongside combined science so it is not involved in science pathway discounting.

A pupil takes the following:

May 2019	June 2019
Computer science (7)	Combined science (9)

Table 4: Science example 4

The computer science qualification taken in May 2019 does not determine the science pathway and the two pathways are still open. Therefore the science pathway is determined by the next qualification taken, for example the combined science in June 2019. The pupil meets the entry criteria for the science element of the EBacc with the combined science and computer science also counts.

A pupil takes the following:

May 2019	June 2019
Combined science (6-6)	Computer science (5)

Table 5: Science example 5

The combined science taken in May 2019 determines that the pupil is on the combined science pathway. The pupil meets the entry criteria for the science element of the EBacc and both qualifications can count in the Ebacc slot for the Attainment 8/Progress 8 measure.

As this pupil has entered combined science, they count as entering the EBacc science subject area so their grade will also count towards EBacc APS.

The combined science grades can also count towards Progress 8/Attainment 8, with up to two grades counting in either the EBacc slots or the open slots, where this represents the highest relevant grades achieved.

Please note: GCSEs in core, additional and further additional science have not counted in the performance tables since 2018.

Moving schools

The early entry policy states that if a pupil previously certificated a qualification whilst enrolled at another school, the grade does not count in performance measures unless the new school chooses not to re-enter the pupil or if it is an unreformed qualification. If the school decides to re-enter the pupil (in a reformed qualification), the grade from that attempt counts, regardless of whether it is higher or lower than the previous attempt.

For exception science discounting purposes, this means that if a pupil starts a new pathway at a new school, the previous qualifications are discounted. However, if a pathway is continued, the whole pathway counts.

A pupil takes the following:

Old School	New School
Biology (6)	Combined science (5-5)

Table 6: Moving school example 1

As a new pathway has been started at the new school, the biology qualification is discounted.

A pupil takes the following:

Old School	New School
Biology (4)	Chemistry (5)

Table 7: Moving school example 2

As the same pathway has been continued at the new school, both qualifications count.

AS level exception discounting in English and mathematics

After early entry discounting has been carried out, exception discounting is carried out across levels for English and mathematics qualifications, for example between AS levels and level 1/level 2 qualifications. The AS level(s) always discount the lower level qualifications as per the first discounting principle. For example, an AS mathematics discounts the GCSE, and an AS English language and literature discounts GCSE English language and/or GCSE English literature.

AS level exception discounting is not applied to science qualifications. For example, a pupil could have GCSEs in combined science and an AS level in an individual science. However, AS level exception discounting does apply to both computer science and environmental science⁷, as they are not subjects which can determine a student's science pathway. If a pupil were to take a GCSE and AS level in computer science, the GCSE would be discounted by the AS level

If you require more detailed information for a specific situation, please [contact us](#).

⁷ To note, GCSEs in environmental science no longer count in performance tables from 2019.

Annex A – Science pathway discounting

	Pathway 1	Pathway 2	All other science qualifications
Pathway Name	Individual sciences	Combined science	
Qualification discount code(s)	RC1 RH3 RD1	RA1E	RA14 CK1* QA3
Qualifications included	Physics (RC1) Biology (RH3) Chemistry (RD1)	Edexcel L1/2 Certificate (RA1E) AQA Level 1/2 Certificate (RA1E) OCR Level 1/2 Certificate (RA1E) WJEC Level 1/2 Certificate (RA1E)	Applied science (RA14) Computer science or computing (CK1*) Any other science qualifications, such as environmental science (QA3)

*Since 2014 computer science and computing have been included in the science element of the EBacc, and count in addition to the other separate sciences. If computer science is a pupil's first science qualification, the two available science pathways are still open. For example, a pupil may take the computer science GCSE and then go down the individual science pathway and take three individual science qualifications – in which case all four science qualifications count.



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